

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 OES-03 TRSE-00 INT-05 FEA-01

AID-05 /031 W

----- 101855

R 091400Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0513

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

USDOC WASHDC

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DAMASCUS/CAIRO FOR TRADE MISSION DIRECTOR BOUDREAU

USDOC FOR CAGNE

PASS TREASURY FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY PARSKY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, USSAEC, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI DESALINATION PROGRAM

REF: A. JIDDA 796

B. JIDDA 1472

BEGIN SUMMARY: CALL BY AMBASSADOR ON HEAD OF
SAG DESALINATION AUTHORITY INDICATED THAT HE WOULD
WELCOME "FACT-FINDING" MISSION FROM U.S. INDUSTRY;
THAT SCOPE OF DESALINATION PROGRAM EVEN GREATER
THAN WE HAD REALIZED; AND THAT HE WAS DISENCHANTED
WITH ECONOMIC COMMISSION DUE TO LACK OF ACTION
ON HIS REQUEST FOR HELP WITH STARTING A DESALINA-
TION RESEARCH CENTER.

ACTION REQUESTED: BY COMMERCE: THAT "FACT-FINDING"

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MISSION BE CONSTITUTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. BY

TREASURY: THAT TEAM BE DISPATCHED BEFORE THE END
OF APRIL TO INITIATE PLANNING FOR RESEARCH CENTER.
END SUMMARY

1. AMBASSADOR CALLED ON PRINCE MOHAMMED ON MARCH 5
TO DISCUSS DESALINATION MATTERS, INCLUDING IDEA
FOR VISIT OF "FACT-FINDING" GROUP. THE PRINCE
WARMLY WELCOMED THE IDEA, OBSERVING THAT THE
ENORMOUS SCOPE OF HIS FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR DESALINA-
TION PROJECTS CERTAINLY WARRANTED A MAJOR INCREASE
IN U.S. BUSINESS INTEREST. IN REPLY TO THE
AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT U.S. INDUSTRY HAD NOT
BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN THE LARGE-SCALE DESALINATION
FIELD FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, HE SAID "GET
THEM OUT HERE AND I WILL BUILD A FIRE UNDER THEM."
HE ALSO ENDORSED THE IDEA OF FABRICATION FACILITIES
LOCATED EITHER IN SAUDI ARABIA OR EGYPT, TO REDUCE
SHIPPING COSTS.

2. PRINCE MOHAMMED STATED THAT HIS DESALINATION
PROGRAM CONTINUES TO EXPAND: THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN
CALLING FOR A BUDGET OF SR 25 BILLION (\$7 BILLION)
IS NOW BEING INCREASED BY 70 PERCENT/(I.E. \$5 BILLION) JUST BY ONE
MAJOR REVISION OF THE PLANS FOR JUBAIL; THE BUDGET
FOR THE COMING YEAR ALONE WILL BE SR 9 BILLION.
(NOTE THAT EVEN ALLOWING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND
INDIRECT COSTS, BUDGET SHORTFALL, ETC., THESE
FIGURES STILL INDICATE A FAR LARGER PROGRAM THAN
WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.)

3. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION
COULD DO ANYTHING TO SUPPORT HIS PLANS, PRINCE
MOHAMMED EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER THE COM-
MISSION COULD ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING WHICH DIRECT
CONTACT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD NOT DO
BETTER. HE OBSERVED THAT WHEN HE NEEDS SOMETHING
FROM THE U.S., HE GOES THERE PERSONALLY AND MAKES
THE CONTACTS HE DESIRES. HE THEN TURNED ABOUT
AND ALLOWED THAT AS LONG AS THE COMMISSION WAS
ESTABLISHED, HE SAW NO OBJECTION TO WORKING THROUGH
IT; HOWEVER, HE HAD SEEN NO ACTION WHATSOEVER ON
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THE ONE SPECIFIC REQUEST HE HAD MADE THROUGH THE
COMMISSION: ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPMENT OF A DE-
SALINATION RESEARCH CENTER. (CF. SECTION V OF
THE SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY WORKING GROUP REPORT ON
THEIR SEPTEMBER 16-17 MEETING). HE HAS PROCEEDED
WITH DIRECT CONTACTS WITH A PRIVATE CONSULTANT
FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS CENTER ON THE PHYSICAL
SIDE, BUT WOULD STILL BE PLEASED TO RECEIVE THE

ASSISTANCE OF A TEAM OF ABOUT THREE EXPERTS TO DEVELOP THE PROGRAM AND TECHNICAL SIDE. HE DOES NOT RPT NOT WANT "GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES," BUT RATHER INDIVIDUALS FROM THE ACADEMIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS. HE IN FACT HAS SEVERAL NAMES OF SPECIFIC PEOPLE HE WANTS, AND HE PROMISED TO SEND THESE NAMES TO THE EMBASSY.

4. THE SITE FOR THE RESEARCH CENTER HAS ALREADY BEEN SELECTED; LOCATED ON THE RED SEA COAST ABOUT 50 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF YENBO. THE PRINCE SAID THAT HE HAS HOPES FOR SEEING THE DESALINATION RESEARCH CENTER THERE BECOME THE NUCLEUS OF A "SCIENTIFIC CITY" AT THIS LOCATION, WITH SUFFICIENT FACILITIES TO ATTRACT AND MAKE LIFE COMFORTABLE FOR FOREIGN SCIENTISTS.

5. ACTION REQUESTED:

A. BY COMMERCE: THAT THE FACT-FINDING MISSION BE CONSTITUTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE CAIRO DESALINATION CONFERENCE. WISH TO AGAIN EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GROUP EXHIBITING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE DURING THE VISIT (C.F. PARAS 2, 4, AND 5 OF REF A). NEED TARGET DATE FOR ARRIVAL AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, AS PRINCE MOHAMMED TRAVELS FREQUENTLY AND WE WILL NEED TO GIVE HIM AMPLE ADVANCE NOTICE. THIS VISIT WOULD NOT OF COURSE HAVE ANY CONNECTION WITH JOINT COMMISSION ACTIVITIES AND SHOULD BE HANDLED AS A NORMAL COMMERCIAL EVENT.

B. BY TREASURY: THAT A CONCRETE PROPOSAL BE DEVELOPED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR A PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE TO PRINCE MOHAMMED IN THE DEVELOPMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE DESALINATION RESEARCH CENTER. AS IT IS NOT CLEAR JUST HOW CONCRETE ARE HIS IDEAS FOR THE CENTER, THE PROPOSAL WILL NEED TO BE RATHER FLEXIBLE, BUT PRESUMABLY MUST TAKE AS A STARTING POINT A SHORT TERM VISIT OF 2 OR 3 INDIVIDUALS TO DEVELOP PROGRAM AND STAFFING RECOMMENDATION. NOTE CAVEAT AGAINST "GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES."
AKINS

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